Classic Poetry Series

Joseph Skipsey

- poems -

Publication Date:

2004

Publisher:

PoemHunter.Com - The World's Poetry Archive

Get Up!

Get up!" the caller calls, "Get up!"
And in the dead of night,
To win the bairns their bite and sup,
I rise a weary wight.

My flannel dudden donn'd, thrice o'er
My birds are kiss'd, and then
I with a whistle shut the door,
I may not ope again.

Joseph Skipsey

Mother Wept

Mother wept, and father sigh'd;
 With delight a-glow
Cried the lad, "To-morrow," cried,
 "To the pit I go."

Up and down the place he sped,
 Greeted old and young,
Far and wide the tidings spread,
 Clapp'd his hands and sung.

Came his cronies, some to gaze
 Rapt in wonder; some
Free with counsel; some with praise;
 Some with envy dumb.

"May he," many a gossip cried,
 "Be from peril kept;"
Father hid his face and sighed,
 Mother turned and wept

Joseph Skipsey

The Butterfly

The butterfly from flower to flower
 The urchin chas'd; and, when at last
He caught it in my lady's bower,
 He cried, "Ha, ha!" and held it fast.

Awhile he laugh'd, but soon he wept,
 When looking at the prize he'd caught
He found he had to ruin swept
 The very glory he had sought

Joseph Skipsey

The Darling

Misfortune is a darling, ever
Most faithful to the minstrel race;
Let low-bred wretches shun them, never
Yet acted she a part so base.

True, oft by her the bard discovers
He's stript of all he once possest;
But then, just like your sculpture-lovers,
She likes her idols naked, best.

Joseph Skipsey

The Dewdrop

AH, be not vain. In yon flower-bell,
As rare a pearl, did I appear,
As ever grew in ocean shell,
To dangle at a Helen’s ear.

So was I till a cruel blast
Arose and swept me to the ground,
When, in the jewel of the past,
Earth but a drop of water found.

Joseph Skipsey

The Hartley Calamity

The Hartley men are noble, and
Ye'll hear a tale of woe;
I'll tell the doom of the Hartley men -
The year of sixty two.

'Twas on the Thursday morning, on
The first month of the year,
When there befell the thing that well
May rend the heart to hear.

Ere chanticleer with music rare
Awakes the old homestead,
The Hartley men are up and off
To earn their daily bread.

On, on they toil; with heat they broil,
And streams of sweat still glue
The stour unto their skins, till they
Are black as the coal they hew.

Now to and fro the putters go,
The waggons to and fro,
And clang on clang the wheel and hoof
Ring in the mine below.

The din and strife of human life.
Awake in 'wall' and 'board',
When, lo! a shock is felt which makes
Each human heart-beat heard.

Each bosom thuds, as each his duds
He snatches and away,
And to the distant shaft he flees
With all the speed he may.

Each, all, they flee -- by two -- by three
They seek the shaft, to seek
An answer in each other's face,
To what they may not speak.

"Are we entombed?" they seem to ask,
For the shaft is closed, and no
Escape have they to God's bright day
From out the night below.

So stand in pain the Hartley men,
And o'er them speedily comes
The memory of home and all
That links us to our homes.

Despair at length renews their strength,
And they the shaft must clear,

And soon the sound of mall and pick,
Half drowns the voice of fear.

And hark! to the blow of the mal below
Do the sounds above reply?
Hurra, hurra, for the Hartley men,
For now their rescue's nigh.

Their rescue nigh? The sound of joy
And hope have ceased, and ere
A breath is drawn a rumble heard
Re-drives them to despair.

Together now behold them bow;
Their burden'd souls unload
In cries that never rise in vain
Unto the living God.

Whilst yet they kneel, again they fell
Their strength renewed -- again
The swing and the ring of the mall attests
The might of the Hartley men.

And hark! to the blow of the mall below,
Do sounds above reply?
Hurra, hurra, for the Hartley men,
For now their rescue's nigh.

But lo! yon light, erewhile so bright
No longer lights the scene;
A cloud of mist yon light has kiss'd
And shorn it of its sheen.

A cloud of mist yon light has kiss'd,
See! how long it steels,
Till one by one the lights are smote,
And deep the doom prevails.

"Oh, father, till the shaft is rid,
Close, close besides me keep;
My eyelids are together glued,
And I -- and I -- must sleep".

Sleep, darling, sleep, and I will keep
Close by -- heigh-ho!" To keep
Himself awake the father strives --
But he -- he too -- must sleep."

"O, brother, till the shaft is rid,
Close, close besides me keep;
My eyelids are together glued,
And I -- and I -- must sleep."

Sleep, brother, sleep and I will keep
Close by -- heigh-ho! To keep
Half awake the brother strives --
But he -- he too must sleep.

"O mother, dear! wert, wert thou near
Whilst sleep!" And the orphan slept;
And all night long by the black pit heap
The mother a dumb watch kept

And fathers, and mothers, and sisters, and brothers,
The lover and the new-made bride --
A vigil kept for those who slept,
From eve to morning tide.

But they slept -- still -- in silence dread,
Two hundred old and young,
To awake when heaven and earth have sped
And the last dread trumpet rung.

Joseph Skipsey